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Interview Data Collection for Identification of Potential Combat Effectiveness Variables

Richard A. White

Continental Systems Technology

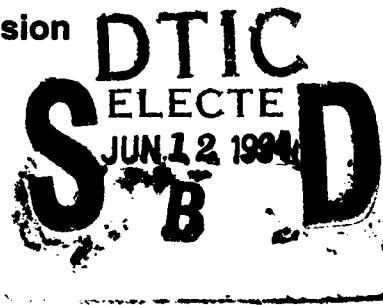
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Technical review by

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This report presents preliminary results from interviews with soldiers participating in field exercises in Kuwait. This report sets forth observations and interpretations from the collected interviews that may have implications for personnel, training, and other Army systems. The results, combined with previous collection efforts, should provide a sampling of combat effectiveness variables that will assist in determining if combat performance can be predicted during the initial selection process.			
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INTERVIEW DATA COLLECTION FOR IDENTIFICATION OF POTENTIAL COMBAT
EFFECTIVENESS VARIABLES

CONTENTS

	Page
GENERAL	1
PURPOSE	1
PROJECT BACKGROUND	1
METHODOLOGY	2
OBSERVATIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS	3
RECOMMENDATION	6

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**Interview Data Collection
for
Identification of Potential
Combat Effectiveness Variables**

GENERAL

This Research Note is submitted under an Army Research Institute contract titled "Interview Data Collection for Identification of Potential Combat Effectiveness Variables." Richard A. White is the project manager and chief military analyst for the contractor, Continental Systems Technology.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this note is to set forth observations and interpretations from the collected interviews that may have implications for personnel, training, and other Army systems.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI) has been conducting research to improve the Army's selection and classification procedures. A critical need in this research program is the development of better measures of combat performance against which new tests prepared for selection and classification purposes can be assessed. During the fall of 1992, large numbers of soldiers who participated in combat during Desert Storm were participating in a field exercise in Kuwait.

Continental Systems Technology (CST) previously was awarded and completed a project for ARI titled "Measurement of Combat Performance." The products completed were a literature review that determined there was a foundation for the development of preliminary combat performance measures for Army enlisted soldiers and a plan for the development of these measures. Also during the project a CST team interviewed Desert Storm veterans from ARI Project A at Fort Benning and Fort Stewart, Ga. Richard A. White and Dandridge M. Malone comprised the CST team with Drs. Elizabeth Brady and Henry Busciglio from ARI monitoring and participating. Over 200 soldiers were interviewed.

The Kuwait operation offered the opportunity to collect additional interview data from both Desert Storm veterans and non-veterans in a close-to-combat environment. Accordingly, CST submitted an unsolicited proposal to collect interview data on audio

tapes, to provide transcripts of the data and submit this research memorandum which includes the analysts' observation and interpretation of the interview data. ARI awarded the contract for the effort on 8 September, 1992. The data collection team was headed by Dr. Brady, ARI and included Mr. Malone and Mr. White for CST.

On 29 September, Joint Task Force - Kuwait (JTF-K) provided comprehensive command and intelligence briefings and in-depth Mideast orientation. Following this the team was taken on an aerial reconnaissance of Kuwait including base camps, ranges and training areas. Heavy destruction from the war was still evident but clean-up operations and reconstruction were ongoing. The oil fires were out and the skies clear.

From 30 September through 8 October the team conducted small group interviews with 256 soldiers and individual interviews with selected senior officers and non-commissioned officers. The team went to the soldiers both in the desert during tactical operations and to the various base camps. Soldiers participating in the data collection were from elements of the 1st Cavalry Division, 5th Special Forces and Central Command Training and Security. They were very cooperative and provided incisive descriptions of individual and team high performance incidents.

The results, combined with the previous collection efforts should provide a sampling of combat effectiveness variables that will assist in determining if combat performance can be predicted during the initial selection process. CST is currently being evaluated for a project which would continue this effort to develop, demonstrate and validate an assessment capability to select initial entry soldiers based on combat effectiveness variables that will predict high performance in combat.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this project, the collection of potential individual combat effectiveness variables, had its origin in the need for valid criteria for predictors of combat effectiveness. Such criteria must, in some way, relate to combat effectiveness, either directly or secondarily.

The research procedure best suited to address this problem of identifying a person's general characteristics that are causally related to complex outcomes is the *behavioral event interview*. This technique, developed by David McClelland and his colleagues at McBer and Company, is a structured method which focuses upon differences between superior and average job incumbents. This method was modified in the current instance to fit a situation in which pre-identification of superior and average incumbents was not feasible.

This procedure involves a carefully structured interview which permits extraction of behaviors, attributes, and characteristics of effective combat personnel. Ideally, the behavioral event interview, coupled with a modified Competency Analysis, will produce a reliable set of attributes suitable for confirmation as Combat Effectiveness Variables.

Interview subjects were individuals and teams involved in training operations in Kuwait. Approximately 50% of these individuals were Gulf War veterans. All interviews were

audio-tape recorded. The recordings are being transcribed to provide hard-copy printouts for future analysis.

OBSERVATIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS

The observations and interpretations cited were obtained from the interviews by the military analysts and may have implications for personnel and training in the Army. They are based on the actual data collection operation and editing during the transcription process, not in-depth analysis of the interviews. Also, all tapes have not been transcribed as this report is being written. As a result, there may be further observations and increased understanding of those provided herein. The information will be provided in a Matrix Format by subject, with brief observation and interpretation data from the analysts. Observations and interpretations from the interview data transcribed to date are provided on the following pages.

SUBJECT AREA	OBSERVATIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS
Potential Combat Effectiveness	Teamwork Capacity
Variables or Elements of Variables	Knowledge of own job and others
	Communication of information beyond job requirements
	Interdependence versus independence
	Information acquisition
	Confidence
	Self Motivation
	Achievement orientation
	Discipline
	Eagerness
	Team Player
	Intelligence balanced with common sense
	Work without supervision
	Adaptability
	Stay informed

SUBJECT AREA	OBSERVATIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS
	<p>Do job without complaint</p> <p>Calmness</p> <p>Assist others</p> <p>Ability to think under stress</p> <p>Responsibility</p> <p>Know right way but understand how to adjust to reality</p> <p>Situational adaptability</p> <p>Self evaluation and modification</p> <p>Care about others</p> <p>Courage vs Recklessness</p>
Training	<p>Train - Train - Train</p> <p>Knowing it backwards and forwards = Training</p> <p>Checklists are important</p> <p>Repetitious drilling important for success on the battlefield</p> <p>1st Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division; Crawl - Walk - Run Training Process is effective</p> <p>Corps elements of 1st Cavalry Task Force didn't get maximum training benefit</p> <p>Training Plans need to include all participants</p>
Personnel	<p>Filling units with body count for the deployment hurts morale and effectiveness</p> <p>Concern about performance of mid-level Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) with 12 - 15 years service</p> <p>Body count vs Quality Teams</p> <p>Personnel shifts for deployment give no advantage to pre-deployment teams and training</p>

SUBJECT AREA	OBSERVATIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS
	<p>Why the emphasis on college degree for NCOs? Some view it as the only difference between officers and NCOs. So, if they have one, where's the pay?</p> <p>Some mal-assignment in critical areas. i.e. Unqualified Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Warfare NCOs.</p> <p>Promotion Point System causes concern</p> <p>Army really takes care of you.</p>
Command Climate	<p>Many differences cited between posts. Considered critical for high performance.</p> <p>Poor communications were cited in <u>many</u> instances as having an extremely negative effect on morale and effectiveness. Many soldiers stated that they learned more about what they "were doing there" from Cable News Network (CNN) than from their own command structure. Conversely, there was a feeling that higher command was out of touch with the feelings of "the troops". i.e. Commanders were reporting to the folks back home that everyone was having a fine time and operations were proceeding wonderfully, when in fact many of the soldiers felt that just the opposite was true. Lack of credibility in leadership was cited often as a major problem. Conversely, those soldiers who had been in units where the commanders made a strong effort to keep everyone informed commented that this had contributed greatly to high morale and resulted in increased combat effectiveness.</p> <p>Discipline is the "Lightning Rod" through the system.</p> <p>Sexual harassment did not seem to be an issue. Teams take care of their own.</p>
National Training Center	<p>Combat has more stress but easier than National Training Center (NTC).</p> <p>NTC has leader focus. Soldiers are training aids.</p>
"World Training Center" - Kuwait	<p>More stressful than NTC because of unknown, border fire fights, terrorist threat, and kidnapping of United Nations munitions expert.</p> <p>Deployment very realistic.</p>

SUBJECT AREA	OBSERVATIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS
	Operations there have increased effectiveness because of underlying threat and remaining mines and munitions in desert.
Coalition Operations with Kuwait	<p>The effort to improve the Kuwait Forces must be carefully thought out and coordinated with all involved elements.</p> <p>Special Forces is playing a major role with Kuwait and their knowledge should be capitalized on in developing operations with U.S. deployed forces.</p>

RECOMMENDATION

Transcription of the interview data for future disposition continues. In that process the tapes are read and listened to by the analysts. Additional observations will be forthcoming. It is recommended that those which may have implications for Army personnel and training systems be provided by CST.